



**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, March 5, 2003**  
**Wisconsin Rapids City Council Chambers**

**LRSC MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Wisconsin Counties Association**

Dick Leffler - Florence County  
Emmer Shields - Ashland County  
Ed Brown - Juneau County

**Wisconsin Towns Association**

Gene Lueck – Bloomer  
Arlyn Helm - Springbrook-Washburn  
Norm Faber – Ithaca-Richland  
LaVerne Grunwald - Caledonia-Waupaca

**League of Wisconsin Municipalities**

Dave Waffle – Reedsburg  
Dennis Melvin - West Bend

**Wisconsin Alliance of Cities**

Rick Jones - Racine

**Regional Planning Commissions/  
Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

Walt Raith - ECWRPC  
Don Kush - WCWRPC

**WisDOT STAFF PRESENT**

Mary Forlenza  
Steve Coons  
Scott Bush  
Mark Wolfgram  
Rod Clark  
Jerry Mentzel

**Others Present**

Bob Cook- TDA  
Todd Pierce – TDA  
Marv Sampson - WTA  
Larry Shiman - Opinion Dynamics

**LRSC MEMBERS EXCUSED**

Bill Handlos - Manitowoc  
Chet Zurawik - Milwaukee County

## **Opening Business (Don Kush, Mary Forlenza)**

Don Kush called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Mary Forlenza took roll call. Minutes from January 8, 2003 were reviewed and accepted as written.

## **Administrative Items (Don, Mary)**

Mary Forlenza introduced Mark Wolfgram, WisDOT's new Administrator for the Division of Transportation Investment Management (DTIM). A familiar face at WisDOT, Mark has been with the Department for 30 years, most recently serving as Chief of the State Highway Programming Section in the Bureau of State Highway Programs, Division of Transportation Investment Management.

Calls have been placed to the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities and the League of Municipalities regarding current vacancies on the Council. The League currently has one vacancy and the Alliance has two vacancies. At the February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting with WisDOT Secretary Busalacchi noted that he appoints new members to the Council.

## **Report on Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> meeting with WisDOT Secretary Frank Busalacchi**

On February 6<sup>th</sup> LRSC Executive Committee members Don Kush, Emmer Shields, Dave Waffle, Rick Jones, Norm Faber and Bill Handlos met with WisDOT Secretary Frank Busalacchi, Deputy Secretary Ruben Anthony Jr., and Executive Assistant Randy Romanski. DOT managers and staff briefed the Secretary just prior to the meeting and were also present at the meeting (Sandy Beaupre, Rod Clark, Mary Forlenza and Steve Coons).

Don Kush reported a very 'favorable impression' of the meeting, noting that Secretary Busalacchi was very engaged in the conversation and has a direct approach to discussing issues. Don Kush briefly reviewed the background and role of the LRSC as well as its past accomplishments. Members of the LRSC Executive Committee then had the opportunity to brief the Secretary on their respective committee activities and current concerns.

Dave Waffle (E&C Chair) was encouraged by the meeting and the Secretary's interest and support of the Council and the Department's Local Transportation Improvement Program.

Rick Jones expressed that he was disappointed that the Governor and DOT are not willing to look at fee increases to support increased needs at the state and local level. we are going to have to deal with transportation shortfall.

Norm Faber was very satisfied with the meeting and stated that Secretary Busalacchi seemed impressed with the Council and its current activities.

Emmer Shields (REAL Chair) agreed that it was a good meeting, productive discussion and good first chance to get an impression of the Secretary. Secretary Busalacchi is a very direct person, and seemed interested in Council activities and accomplishments.

Emmer discussed the upcoming March 25th *Transportation and the Environment: Promoting and Protecting the Public Interest, A Working Conference* in Stevens Point as well as the overweight truck issue. Emmer invited the Secretary Busalacchi to make opening remarks at the conference along with DNR Secretary Hassett and FHWA Wisconsin Division Administrator Bruce Matzke. The Secretary made a commitment to attend. Mary Forlenza noted that the time has already been tentatively reserved on his calendar.

The Secretary stated he has heard good things about the LRSC and is committed to supporting Council activities. In response to questions about the Governor's upcoming budget proposal, he asked that the Council wait until the budget is introduced and the dust settles, then follow-up with him on any concerns. Another meeting will be scheduled with Secretary Busalacchi later on in the year.

### **State 2005-2007 Biennial Budget Update (Rod Clark)**

The Governor's biennial budget was released on February 18<sup>th</sup> and Rod presented a brief overview of the impact on transportation funding.

Transportation is heavily relied on to help solve GPR deficit:

- Governor's budget calls for a transfer of \$500 million from the Transportation Fund to GPR over the biennium
- Most of the reductions will be felt in the State Highway Program (SHP), delaying some projects and requiring bonding to backfill other projects.
- Proposes a vehicle registration fee increase of \$10 to continue the level of bonding need since the average ratio is getting too low.

Local state programs can be viewed as the winners:

- 2% Increases (G.T.A. & Transit), each compounded over 2 years
- Shared Revenue will remain at the same level for 2004

For the federal aid transportation programs, the 2005-07 biennial budget assumes that that federal aid will decrease but Rod is not certain that it will.

- The Governor's budget calls for a 13% cut in 2004 to reflect general reductions in federal funds assumed by the Department of Administration.

WisDOT position reductions: Over 300 existing vacancies; assume they are gone. BTLR Federal Unit, currently down 2 positions. Other areas in WisDOT will lose positions as well through 10% reduction.

### **Council on Research Project - Local Roads Communication Analysis (Larry Shiman, Opinion Dynamics Corp. – PowerPoint presentation)**

Local Roads Pavement Rating Project – Preliminary Results

- Completed a total of 24 interviews:
  - 8 in-depth interviews with WisDOT staff.
  - 16 in-depth interviews with association executives, LRSC reps and other individuals.
- Major Findings:
  - Communications were considered to be successful, although there is some concern about delays in completing the database.
  - Involvement of municipal associations was critical to overcome initial skepticism of project.
  - Associations urged WisDOT and other state agencies to include them more often.
  - There was substantial disagreement as to why municipalities complied. Was it the perceived benefit to the municipality or only because it was a mandatory requirement?
  - People also disagreed over the source of the requirement – local request vs. just another WisDOT requirement.
  - Disagreement on main benefit to municipalities. Use information to lobby state government vs. internal benefits to communities.
  - Respondents believed the requirement was fairly easy to respond to.
  - Number of phone calls not thought to be a problem.
  - People were unable to name any particular means of communication that were especially important – e-mail, phone, statewide meetings.
- Number of responses gathered by...
 

- Telephone (55)	- Internet (64)
- Mail (52)	- Fax (15)
- Numbers of responses by position...
 

- Town Chairman (42)	- Engineer (7)
- Town Clerk (25)	- Co. Hwy. Comm. (6)
- Dir./Public Works (16)	- Mayor (3)
- Village President (14)	
- Full report on final findings of the study will be presented at the next LRSC meeting.

## **TDA Update (Bob Cook, Executive Director)**

Bob presented an update on the State Budget, Federal FFY 03 Transportation Appropriation, FFY04 Reauthorization of TEA-21 and a summary of the TDA/Cambridge Systematics Study findings.

### Funding

- State Budget
  - Increase for maintenance program in the Governor's budget proposal however definitions have been deferred to WisDOT again.
  - Everyone must keep in mind this is NOT a WisDOT Budget and there will still be a significant amount of process and discussion before a final bill is signed by the Governor.
  - The proposed \$500 Million transfer from the Transportation Fund to GPR will be a major hurdle in the budget negotiations. One option is to backfill the state highway program with \$400 million in bonding.
  - This would have a serious impact on the Transportation Fund and future projects. WisDOT is currently paying 3.5 cents of the 28 cents per gallon gas tax for debt service. If WisDOT bonds for the additional \$400 the cost will rise to 11cents out of the current 28 cents/gallon tax, leaving only 17 cents for projects. Puts us in the situation where we may need to go to the Legislature in the future for a revenue increase just to pay off bonds – not to do projects
  - Sets up a different dynamic in the Legislature
    - Politics
    - Southeast Wisconsin vs. Rest of State
    - Out-state programs may win if you look at the current make-up of the Legislature
- Federal Budget
  - Unfortunately, there will be no federal bailout for the Marquette.
  - FFY 2003 Transportation Appropriations Bill just passed & signed by the President
  - \$31.8 billion for Highway, \$7.2 billion for Transit and \$3.4 billion for Aviation.
  - Sets base number higher for TEA-21 reauthorization in FFY 04.
  - House/Senate Transportation Committees pushing for an increase to \$48 billion for Highways in FFY 04. Although they won't get this, it still sets a tone

Transportation Interests are pushing to increase taxes and/or look at other options to generate the revenue needed.

- Gas Tax
- Indexation of Gas Tax
- Ethanol - 2.5 cents back to general fund.
- Spend down the trust fund balances.
- Stop transfers to general fund.
- Increase funds with an increase in taxes to cover

Outlook for FFY 04 – Bob sees a modest increase in federal highway funds but not enough to solve the problems in Southeastern Wisconsin. TEA-3 may be a 2-year reauthorization. Congress may wait for a better economic climate then go for a 6-year bill.

TDA's argument for an increase in federal funds for transportation is based on economic development. Bob briefly summarized the results of the recent TDA/Cambridge Systematics Study "Transportation Improvements Grow Wisconsin's Economy: The Economic Benefits of Transportation Investments".

The study describes the positive impacts of transportation investment in Wisconsin through both quantitative and qualitative research. Bob highlighted the key findings.

- A benefit/cost analysis showed the benefits of increasing investment in the Wisconsin State Trunk Highway System (STH) to be \$21.9 billion. This is the proposed level of investment identified in the *2020 State Highway Plan* and \$5.8 billion above the level of what is needed to maintain the system.
- The total \$9.7 billion in benefits from the additional \$5.8 billion investment is broken down into 2 categories:
  - \$7.0 billion in operating cost and time savings
  - \$2.7 billion from greater business efficiencies (productivity increases)
- On an annual average basis, 4,800 more jobs would exist in Wisconsin if the \$5.8 billion investment was made.

## **Local State and Federal Program Updates (Scott Bush & Steve Coons – WisDOT)**

### Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) - Scott

- Biennial April 1st deadline to encumber LRIP funds.
- WisDOT sent e-mail on March 3<sup>rd</sup> to County Hwy Commissioners reminding them of deadline.
- WisDOT also provided them with a list of unencumbered projects in each county.

- 3 Options:
  - Complete a project substitution of funds for new LRIP project
  - Complete a project change applying unencumbered \$ to an existing LRIP project.
  - Allow funds to be returned to LRIP as authorized by Trans 206.03(4)
- 2002-03 Unencumbered LRIP Funds: 66 projects, \$2,576,928

#### 2005-07 Local Federal Programs: STP-Urban, STP-Rural, Local Bridge - Steve

- 2005-2007 Local Programs Guidelines provided to District offices on 2/28/03.
- STP-Urban program will be developed and approved first.
- Anticipate approvals for all three programs by late summer 2003.
- Estimated annual funding levels (based on 2003-05 levels):
  - STP-Urban - \$44,163,600
  - STP-Rural - \$25,927,400
  - Local Bridge - \$34,760,000
- 2005-2007 Policy Changes:
  - 2000 Census population data used
  - Guidelines, approved project list for consultants available via internet
  - Pilot underway to evaluate/review projects prior to submittal
  - Approved project list for consultants will not include funding levels

#### **Update on March 25<sup>th</sup> LRSC/REAL Conference “Transportation and the Environment: Promoting and Protecting the Public Interest” (Emmer Shields-REAL Chair)**

This will be a working conference to deal with environmental regulatory issues. It will be sponsored by the LRSC and supported by WisDOT and DNR. Goal is to set up a different approach to how we work with each other.

Environmental Review Process – It is a bureaucracy; red tape we have to go through to successfully complete a project.

REAL Committee Identified 6 problems with the current process and possible solutions for each problem.

- Process costs need to be reduced
- Process time needs to be reduced
- Process needs to be simplified
- Need to build trust and partnerships
- Need to improve local government's role in protecting the environment.
- Need to improve Wisconsin DNR's effectiveness in reaching environmental protection goals.

Participants include representatives from WisDOT, DNR, WCHA, Local Government (CVT), consultants, WTBA and other groups. Table assignments will be made ahead of time to ensure balanced representation for each group. Emmer then reviewed the agenda

for the workshop and outcome expectations. For a final product, Emmer will provide a summary of the working conference at the next LRSC meeting.

### **Investment Management Update (Mary Forlenza for Bill Handlos)**

Met in Green Bay (District 3) February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Meeting focused on 3 key items:

- December 2003 Pavement Rating Requirement
- WISLR Status
- How will data be used in *Connections 2030* local road element

Pavement Rating Information - Uploaded 90% of data to system. Went in without any changes. You can view the data, but still can't do queries.

Monthly WISLR Update - Joe Nestler will provide a monthly update to Bill Handlos on WISLR.

Training Manual – (Mary Jo Trapani-Collins and Kelly Schieldt) are working on training. Draft manual available for LRSC at next meeting

Dave Waffle asked if State budget cuts would impact funding for WISLR. Mark Wolfgram responded that it is too early yet to tell, but WISLR will be at the top of the priority list for continued funding.

Walt Raith emphasized that it needs to be understood that WISLR is the replacement of old, outdated system and not a "luxury".

### **Next Agenda:**

- Membership Update
- WISLR Training Manual
- Environmental Conference Report
- COR Project- Quantitative-Survey update
- Budget

**Meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.**